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HD **Fifteen Canadian youths to launch climate lawsuit against Ottawa claiming Charter rights violated**

BY Andrea Woo
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VANCOUVER

A group of youths from across Canada is suing the federal government for failing to adequately take action on the climate crisis and putting future generations at risk.

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The 15 youths, who range in age from 11 to 18 and hail from eight provinces and the Northwest Territories, say the Canadian government's contribution to high levels of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change violate their rights to life, liberty and security of the person under Section 7 of the Charter, and fail to protect essential public trust resources.

They also allege the government's actions violate their right to equality under Section 15 of the Charter, as the effects of climate change disproportionately affect young people.

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The lawsuit is expected to be filed in Federal Court in Vancouver on Friday morning, shortly before Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg speaks at a nearby climate strike.

Chris Tollefson, a professor of law at the University of Victoria and co-counsel on the case, said the plaintiffs are not seeking money, but rather meaningful action from government to mitigate the effects of climate change.

"The remedy would be that government must come up with a plan – a rigorous and scientifically credible plan – that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level that ensures that their Charter rights, and everyone's Charter rights, are properly guaranteed," Mr. Tollefson said.

Plaintiff Cecilia La Rose, 15, of Toronto, says she has been involved in climate activism for much of her life, having attended rallies with her parents when she was small and, more recently, engaging with the Climate Strike Canada network and Ms. Thunberg's "Fridays for Future" movement.

"After quite a few months of striking, [the litigation] was something that I could actually do to legitimately make change that I could see," she said. "It was not a hard decision to decide that this is what I wanted to do with my time."

Similar lawsuits have been filed elsewhere. Notably, a court in The Hague sided with an environmental group in 2015, ruling the Dutch government had a legal obligation to protect its citizens by doing its part

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to keep global temperatures from rising more than two degrees Celsius, a consensus target scientists say is needed for the world to avoid the catastrophic potential of more dramatic climate change.

Legal observers said at the time that the ruling would likely open the door to other litigation related to climate change.

In the United States, 21 youths are suing the federal government over climate change in the case of Juliana v. United States, which has been winding its way through the courts since 2015.

In Canada, an environmental group in Quebec launched a legal battle last year against the Government of Canada on behalf of Quebeckers 35 and younger for "infringing on a generation's fundamental rights." A Superior Court of Quebec judge rejected the proposed class action, due in part to what he called an "arbitrary" age cap, and the group is now appealing.

The Vancouver climate strike that Ms. Thunberg will speak at has been organized by the Metro Vancouver-based, youth-led group Sustainabiliteens. Core organizer Samantha Lin credited the 16-year-old with galvanizing the youth climate movement.

"She's really helping to amplify our movement because she was the catalyst that inspired youth across the world to do this," said Ms. Lin, 17. "It's also important to recognize all the students around the world who have been putting in the work."

Ms. Lin said one of the group's main objectives is to push for a Green New Deal that prioritizes a just transition away from fossil fuels.

"Even after the election, we know that our main priority, no matter who formed government, was going to be to make climate justice a priority and always have it on the agenda," she said.

The Vancouver demonstration is scheduled to begin and end with speeches at the art gallery, with a march through the downtown core in between.

Ms. Thunberg has been striking from school since August, 2018, to demand action on climate change. What began as a solitary protest grew into a semi-formal global movement, with students around the world following her lead and holding weekly strikes under the "Fridays for Future" banner. Ms. Thunberg is now touring Western Canada, and last Friday rallied supporters at the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton.

"We are not doing this because we want to. We aren't doing it because it's fun. We aren't doing it because we have a special interest in the climate, or because we want to become politicians when we grow up," she told the crowd of thousands. "We are doing this because our future is at stake."

A climate strike in Vancouver last month drew an estimated 100,000, according to police. That peaceful protest began at City Hall, with marchers heading over the Cambie Street Bridge downtown.

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